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Title: Need to ensure that arrest of persons in connection with political agitations may not be a ground for denial of passports.

SHRI L. RAJAGOPAL (VIJAYAWADA): Sir, there is a glaring discrimination in issuing/withholding passport to some of our citizens. Once application is submitted for passport, the Passport Officer sends it to the area police station for verification. But, according to the Passport Act, if a person has any criminal case pending against him, he will not be issued any passport. It is not proper, because if a political worker − or, any person for that matter − takes up or participates in *dharna/raasta roko/*procession/demonstration/hunger strike, he is booked under IPC. This becomes a criminal offence and such people are denied passport. Nowadays, majority of the students are taking part in such activities to express their opinion against the policies of the Government. So, when police comes for enquiry, they mention it as criminal offence and passport is denied. Moreover, the Act does not say nor authorities act to cancel passport issued if, subsequently, some criminal charges are filed against the person after issuance of passport. The said provision is archaic and was relevant only to 19th Century. In those days, all Indians were fighting for Independence and the Britishers included this provision with an intention that Indians should not be allowed to go abroad which otherwise strengthen the Freedom Movement. So, the clause was primarily to prevent Indians from going abroad by the Britishers. This clause was also meant to act as a deterrent for all educated Indians taking part in the Freedom Struggle. Hence, it has no relevance in today's circumstances.

So, my plea for consideration of the Government of India is, while issuing passport, that only serious criminal offences such as theft, rape, dacoity, act of terrorism, instigating/perpetrating communal violence, waging a war against India, etc. should be taken into consideration and all others should be issued the passport.

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